SCHOOL CHOICE

SURVEY

IN THE STATE

Nebraska's Opinion on K-12 Education and School Choice

Public Opinion in Nebraska:
Many agree with the concept of school choice. Some disagree. But everyone needs more information. As the public debate continues to grow louder about how best to provide a quality education to all Nebraska children, it is critical to know the facts and to have a good understanding of public opinion.

This statistically representative sample of 1,200 likely Nebraska voters illustrates public opinion on a range of K-12 education issues including school choice.

By:
Paul DiPerna
The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice

September 2009

This public report jointly released by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, Agudath Israel of America, American Legislative Exchange Council, Association of Christian Schools International—Mid-America Region, Black Alliance for Educational Options, Lincoln Christian School, National Catholic Educational Association, Nebraska Catholic Conference, Nebraska District-Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Schools, Nebraska Federation of Catholic School Parents, Omaha Christian Academy

A MESSAGE FROM THE FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION:

COMMITMENT TO METHODS & TRANSPARENCY

The Friedman Foundation is committed to research that adheres to high scientific standards. Matters of methodology and transparency are taken seriously.

All individuals have opinions, and many organizations (like our own) have philosophical or mission orientations. Scientific methods, if designed well and followed closely, should neutralize these opinions and orientations. Research rules and methods minimize bias. We believe rigorous procedural rules of science prevent a researcher's motives, and an organization's particular orientation, from pre-determining results.

If research adheres to scientific standards, its findings can be relied upon no matter who has conducted it. If rules and methods are neither specified nor followed, then the biases of the researcher or an organization may become relevant, because a lack of rigor opens the door for those biases to affect the results.

We are committed to sound research and to provide quality information in a transparent and efficient manner. We welcome any and all questions related to our methodology and work.

Nebraska's Opinion on K-12 Education and School Choice

By:

Paul DiPerna

The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice

Poll conducted by:

Strategic Vision

September 2009

About the Author

Paul DiPerna (paul@friedmanfoundation.org) is a director for the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, an organization dedicated to educating the public on the issue of school choice. He joined the Friedman Foundation in September 2006. DiPerna directs the organization's state polling series and leads grantmaking and direct service activities in a dozen states. He previously served as assistant director for the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution, working there for more than six years. DiPerna was a research analyst for the first five issues of the Brown Center Report on American Education (2000-2004), and managed the activities of the National Working Commission on Choice in K-12 Education (2001-2005).

DiPerna has presented research at the American Sociological Association annual conference, and has published articles in *Education Next*, *First Monday*, the *Washington Examiner*, and the *Journal of Information Technology Impact*. In 2008, he published a textbook chapter in the *Handbook of Research on Web Log Analysis*.

About Strategic Vision

Strategic Vision is an Atlanta-headquartered public relations and public affairs agency with a division that specializes in polling. The public affairs team is knowledgeable about politics, issues, and current events throughout the nation. Strategic Vision operates nationally, and its polls have been used by MSNBC, FOX News Channel, *Newsweek*, Bloomberg News, *Time Magazine*, BBC, ABC News, Scripps Howard, the *Washington Times*, and *USA Today*. The company's polls have been cited as some of the most accurate by National Journal's Hotline and Survey USA.

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Executive Summary

This statistically representative survey of 1,200 likely Nebraska voters illustrates public opinion on a wide range of K-12 education issues. The underlying theme of the Friedman Foundation's *Survey in the State* series is to measure voter knowledge and attitudes toward public institutions and policies, innovative ideas, and the state's K-12 education system.

Nebraskans have shared with us their views about "school choice," which includes school vouchers, tax-credit scholarships, charter schools, homeschooling and virtual schools. Nebraska is the thirteenth state to be surveyed in our series.

An overarching theme emerging out of the survey results is a major disconnect between parental schooling preferences and actual school enrollments.[1]

- 44% of K-12 parents say they would like to send their child to a private school.[2] In reality, however, approximately 12% of Nebraska's K-12 students attend private schools.
- 11% of parents say they would like to send their child to a charter school. The state of Nebraska does not have a charter school law.
- 21% of parents said they would choose a regular public school for their child. Approximately 88% of Nebraska's K-12 students attend regular public schools.

A total of 1,200 phone interviews were conducted by Strategic Vision between April 17 and 19, 2009. The margin of error for the full sample of likely voters is ± 3 percentage points; the margin of error is higher when considering the number of respondents for a given demographic subgroup.

KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

Nebraska likely voters most frequently associate the state with the terms "University of Nebraska Football," "Ranching," and "Cornhusker." (see page 12 for Wordle illustration)

The state's Democrats (D), Republicans (R), and Independents (I) find common ground on school choice topics and issues.

- High levels of support exist for **tax-credit scholarships** (D: 52% | R: 59% | I: 53%) and **school vouchers** (D: 53% | R: 54%| I: 63%).

More Nebraskans say the state's public school system is either "good" or "excellent" rather than "fair" or "poor", but views vary depending on a person's location within the state.

- The South-Central part of the state and Lincoln offer solid support for the state's school system; the Panhandle and North-Central region less so.
- Suburbanites are more satisfied with the school system than likely voters living in urban and rural communities.

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[1] Regular public school and private school enrollments (2007-2008) obtained from the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). http://www.nde.state.us/ndepress/Quick Facts.pdf

[2] The subgroup "K-12 Parents" makes up 44% of the total survey sample (n=528).

- Families with household incomes between $25,000 and $75,000 are much less positive than other income groups.

Likely voters most frequently describe the state's public school system using terms like "Good/Strong Academics," "Expensive," and "Sports." (see page 14 for Wordle illustration)

Nebraskans are skeptical about new public school spending.

- 71% of voters say Nebraska's level of public school funding is either "about right" or "too high."

According to voters, the top challenges confronting Nebraska's public school system include:

- Lack of accountability (29%).
- Overcrowded classrooms and schools (23%).
- Poor engagement with parents (21%).

A large majority of likely voters (84%) prefer choosing a school among options that include private schools, charter schools, virtual schools, and homeschooling.

- Three times as many voters say they prefer a private school (48%) rather than a regular public school (16%).

Nebraskans are more likely to favor (55%) a tax-credit scholarship system, rather than oppose (41%) such a system.

- Support is strongest in urban, small town, and rural areas; relatively weaker in suburban communities.
- Among age groups, support is strongest among 46-to-55 year-olds (61% favor-34% oppose).
- 59% of those with "union ties" (either belonging to a union, or having a family member in a union), favor tax-credit scholarships.

When asked about school vouchers in general, 55% of Nebraska voters say they favor the idea.

- Lincoln and Omaha residents are most supportive (60% and 58% respectively), when considering geographic locations.
- Nearly 2 out of 3 Independent voters (63%) favor school vouchers.
- 61% of those with union ties say they favor school vouchers.

Methodology

We obtained a total of 1,200 completed interviews with "likely voters" in Nebraska, providing ample statistical representation for this specific population. The sample's statistical significance and probability are sufficient for assessment.

The margin of sampling error (MSE) at the conventional 95% confidence level is ± 3 points for the total sample. It is important to note that the MSE is higher when considering the number of respondents for a given demographic subgroup. For example, the MSE for a subgroup of 150 respondents is ± 8 points.

In addition to sampling error, question wording, ordering, and other practical difficulties when conducting surveys may introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion research.

Strategic Vision conducted phone interviews using a random sample of registered Nebraska voters from its call center. Random Digit Dial (RDD) samples were produced by Survey Sampling International (SSI) using a sampling frame that includes all active telephone area codes and exchanges in the United States. This process randomly generates phone numbers for calls.

SSI starts with a database of all listed telephone numbers, updated on a four- to six-week rolling basis, 25 percent of the listings at a time. All active blocks—contiguous groups of 100 phone numbers for which more than one residential number is listed—are added to this database. Blocks and exchanges that include only listed business numbers are excluded.

Strategic Vision's live callers conducted all phone interviews from April 17 to 19, 2009. A total of 3,074 calls were made in Nebraska. Of these calls 215 were disconnected, non-residential, or non-answers; 1,211 were refusals; 351 did not qualify as likely voters; 97 did not complete the survey. The response rate for this survey was 44%.

A set of screening questions was used to determine past voting behavior and likely voting in 2010. Respondents were asked whether they had voted in the 2008 election and were planning to vote in the next election in 2010. Respondents who satisfied both these criteria were classified as "likely voters" and were included in the survey. Respondents who either did not vote in 2008 or were not likely to vote in the next election were not included.

The author of this report takes sole responsibility for any errors or misrepresentations.

Part 1 Selected Survey Snapshots & Crosstabs

Q1. **"What ONE WORD best describes your impression of Nebraska? Just the one word that best describes Nebraska."**

TOP 20 IMPRESSIONS (by frequency)

University of Nebraska Football ... 133	Rural ... 77	Kool-Aid ... 48	Large State ... 34
Ranching ... 132	Warren Buffett ... 53	Poor ... 42	The Good Life ... 34
Cornhusker ... 126	Where the West Begins ... 50	Flat ... 37	Green ... 25
Farming ... 106	Conservative ... 49	Arbor Day ... 36	Strange ... 8
Beef ... 95	Tornado Alley ... 49	Backward ... 34	Cattle ... 3

FIGURE SHOWS NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO OFFERED EACH IMPRESSION; THESE NUMBERS ARE NOT PERCENTAGES.

For Question #1, Strategic Vision supplied responses and their frequencies. Each respondent was asked to provide one descriptive word about the state of Nebraska. Phrases were accepted. The sample produced 185 distinct "impressions."

We illustrate likely voters' impressions by entering responses into Wordle, which is a Web tool that generates "word clouds" from text provided by the user. The clouds give greater visibility to responses that appear more frequently in the supplied source text.

Derivative and closely related responses were matched and grouped together under a single general impression. For example, we received responses including "ranching," "ranches," and "ranchers." All responses were coded under the single impression "ranching" because this specific response had the highest frequency.

For this Wordle, the impression cut-off is frequency=2, displaying 22 impressions. "Don't Know" responses (frequency=28) are not included in the illustration in order to emphasize clear impressions.

Q3. "How would you rate Nebraska's public school system?"

	"Good" or "Excellent" %	"Fair" or "Poor" %	Good/Excellent-Fair/Poor Gap %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	**48**	**40**	**+8**	**1,200**
K-12 Parent	45	43	+2	528
City or Region				
Panhandle	41	48	(-7)	69
North-Central	42	49	(-7)	96
South-Central	45	34	+11	203
Eastern	46	41	+5	512
Omaha	47	40	+7	210
Lincoln	52	36	+16	110
Urban	45	40	+5	109
Suburban	53	37	+16	184
Small Town	48	39	+9	439
Rural	46	43	+3	468
Democrat	46	39	+7	406
Republican	48	41	+7	571
Independent	49	41	+8	181
Age Group				
18 – 25	46	41	+5	103
26 – 35	48	37	+11	262
36 – 45	49	40	+9	375
46 – 55	47	44	+3	193
56 – 65	52	36	+16	121
Over 65	43	43	EVEN	146
Male	44	43	+1	587
Female	51	38	+13	613
African American	45	45	EVEN	44
Hispanic	48	41	+7	93
White	47	41	+6	1,011
Catholic	46	43	+3	337
Protestant	49	38	+11	732
None	43	44	(-1)	108
Household Income				
Under $25,000	54	38	+16	104
$25,000 - $49,999	44	43	+1	423
$50,000 - $74,999	46	43	+3	453
$75,000 - $150,000	52	30	+22	145
Over $150,000	60	31	+29	75
Self or Family in Union?				
Union Ties	48	41	+7	118

Q4. **"What ONE WORD best describes your impression of Nebraska's public school system? Just the one word that best describes Nebraska's education system."**

TOP 13 IMPRESSIONS (by frequency)

Good/Strong Academics....182	Up-To-Date....73	Top Notch....45
Expensive....159	Student-Oriented....72	Old-Fashioned....44
Sports....144	High Quality....61	Under-Performing....36
Rural....96	Bureaucratic....58	
Good/Excellent Teachers....84	Modern....45	

FIGURE SHOWS NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO OFFERED EACH IMPRESSION; THESE NUMBERS ARE NOT PERCENTAGES.

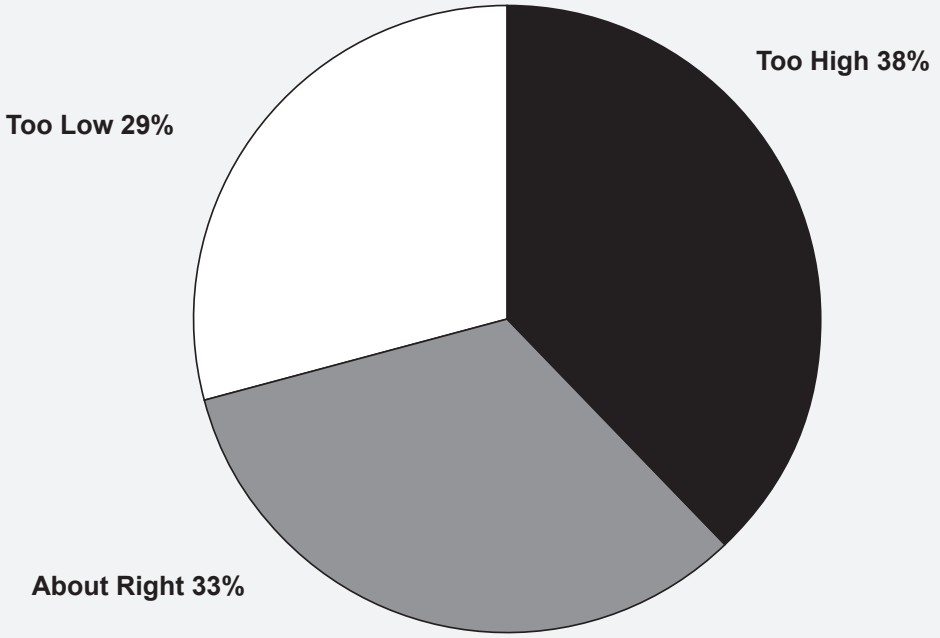
For Question #4, Strategic Vision supplied responses and their frequencies. Each respondent was asked to provide one descriptive word about Nebraska's public school system. Phrases were accepted. The sample produced 135 distinct "impressions."

We illustrate likely voters' impressions by entering responses into Wordle, which is a Web tool that generates "word clouds" from text provided by the user. The clouds give greater visibility to responses that appear more frequently in the supplied source text.

Derivative and closely related responses were matched and grouped together under a single general impression. For example, we received responses including "sports," "nothing but sports," and "sports programs." All responses were coded under the single impression "sports" because this specific response had the highest frequency.

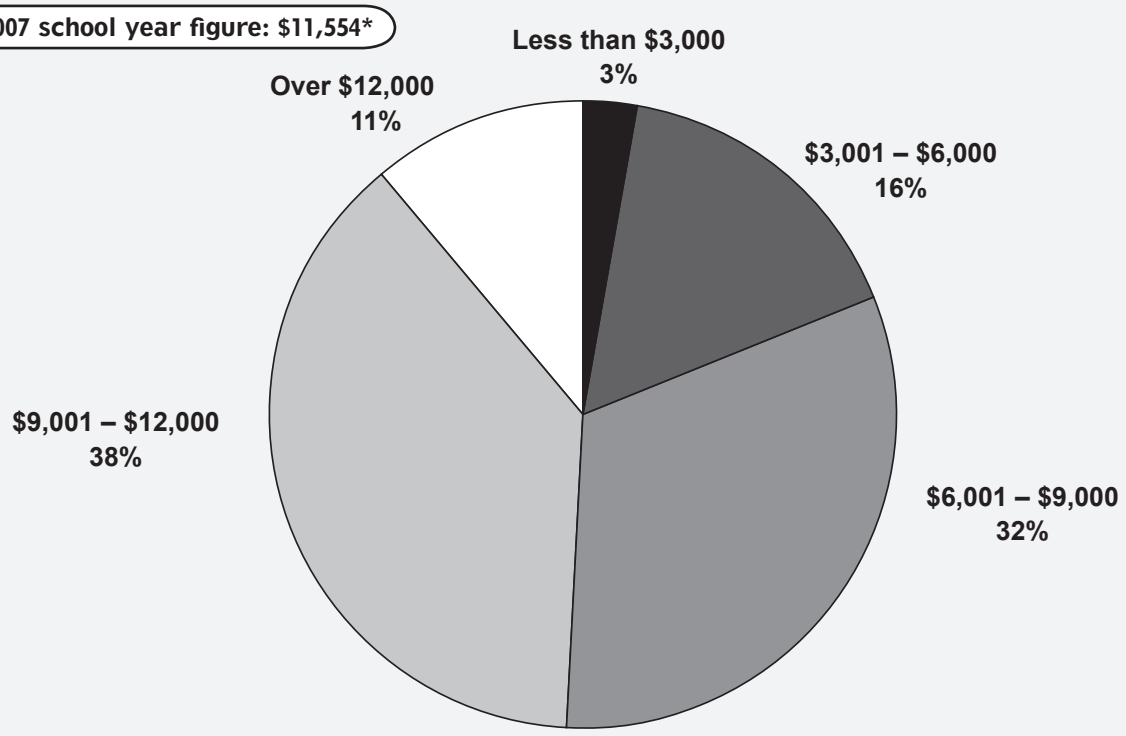
"Don't Know" responses (frequency=97) are not included in the illustration in order to emphasize clear impressions.

Q5. **Do you believe that public school funding in Nebraska is at a level that is:**



Q6. **Approximately how much do you think is currently spent on each student in Nebraska's public schools? Your estimate will represent the combined expenditures of local, state, and federal governments.**

Actual 2007 school year figure: $11,554*



** National Center for Education Statistics, "Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2006-07," published March 2009. Calculated by dividing Nebraska's total expenditures (Table 8) by Nebraska's fall 2006 student membership (Table 3).*

Q10. "What do you see as the biggest challenge confronting Nebraska's public school system?"

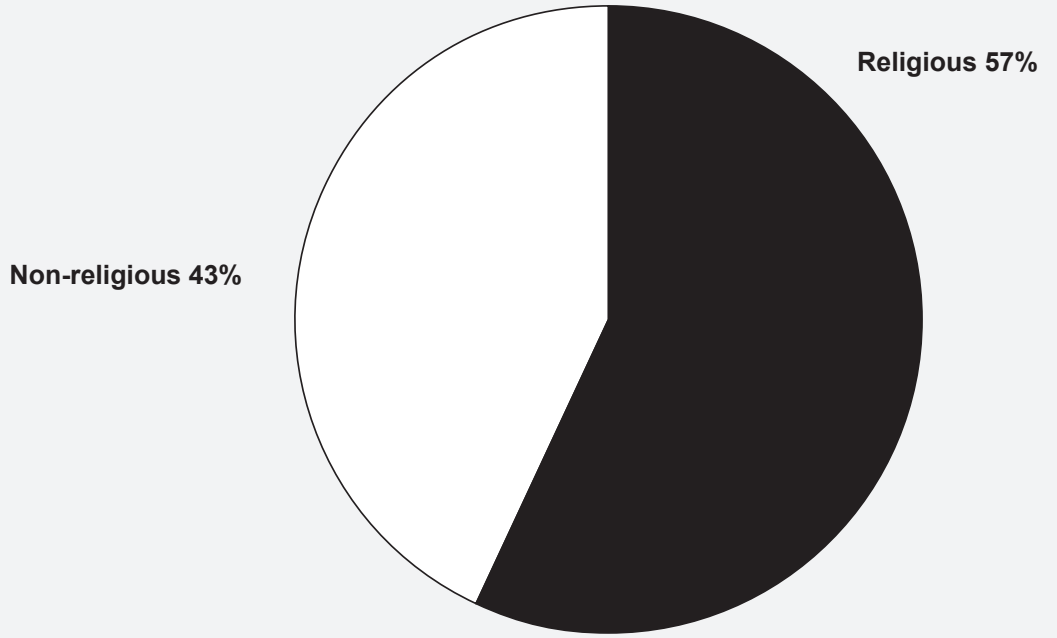
	Accountability %	Funding %	Overcrowded Classrooms, Schools* %	Discipline/ Self-control %	Engagement %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	**29**	**11**	**23**	**16**	**21**	**1,200**
K-12 Parent	29	9	24	17	21	528
City or Region						
Panhandle	32	10	20	26	12	69
North-Central	32	17	23	10	18	96
South-Central	24	15	26	12	23	203
Eastern	31	10	22	17	21	512
Omaha	27	12	21	15	25	210
Lincoln	29	6	29	19	16	110
Urban	27	8	23	18	24	109
Suburban	23	15	22	17	23	184
Small Town	33	10	23	16	18	439
Rural	28	11	24	15	22	468
Democrat	26	12	25	17	19	406
Republican	31	11	23	14	22	571
Independent	30	12	20	19	19	181
Age Group						
18 – 25	27	12	22	17	22	103
26 – 35	26	14	21	20	20	262
36 – 45	32	11	21	16	21	375
46 – 55	31	6	24	16	23	193
56 – 65	27	15	33	12	13	121
Over 65	27	11	23	14	25	146
Male	28	12	23	15	21	587
Female	30	10	23	17	21	613
African American	14	21	25	14	27	44
Hispanic	28	11	25	14	23	93
White	30	11	23	16	20	1,011
Catholic	29	13	24	14	21	337
Protestant	30	10	23	17	21	732
None	27	16	21	18	19	108
Household Income						
Under $25,000	30	12	23	19	16	104
$25,000 - $49,999	30	9	24	15	22	423
$50,000 - $74,999	28	12	22	16	22	453
$75,000 - $150,000	26	12	24	19	18	145
Over $150,000	33	13	23	12	19	75
Self or Family in Union?						
Union Ties	34	12	14	19	22	118

** Collapsed category, combining the possible responses "Overcrowded Classrooms" and "Overcrowded Schools."*

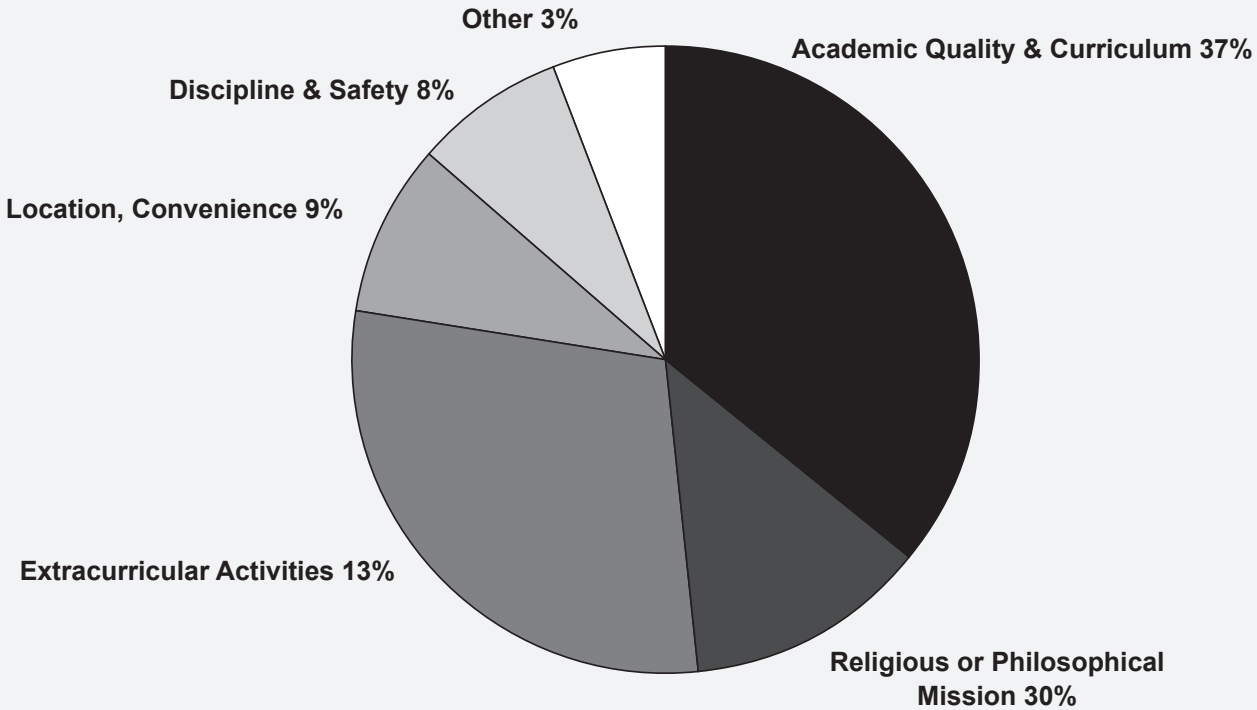
Q11. "If it was your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child?"

	Charter School %	Homeschooling %	Private School %	Regular Public School %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	**11**	**20**	**48**	**16**	**1,200**
K-12 Parent	11	20	44	21	528
City or Region					
Panhandle	16	23	44	16	69
North-Central	13	19	50	16	96
South-Central	13	21	45	15	203
Eastern	11	20	48	17	512
Omaha	8	21	48	16	210
Lincoln	10	17	56	13	110
Urban	9	25	42	18	109
Suburban	10	25	48	14	184
Small Town	10	19	51	15	439
Rural	13	18	47	17	468
Democrat	11	21	47	17	406
Republican	11	21	49	14	571
Independent	11	17	48	19	181
Age Group					
18 – 25	9	24	50	16	103
26 – 35	12	19	47	17	262
36 – 45	11	21	46	17	375
46 – 55	11	15	55	15	193
56 – 65	12	20	53	12	121
Over 65	14	23	43	16	146
Male	11	18	49	17	587
Female	11	22	48	15	613
African American	9	25	48	16	44
Hispanic	14	19	47	11	93
White	11	20	48	16	1,011
Catholic	12	20	49	15	337
Protestant	11	20	48	17	732
None	14	19	44	14	108
Household Income					
Under $25,000	9	18	52	15	104
$25,000 - $49,999	10	20	49	17	423
$50,000 - $74,999	13	19	49	16	453
$75,000 - $150,000	12	24	41	16	145
Over $150,000	9	27	51	11	75
Self or Family in Union?					
Union Ties	9	22	45	21	118

Q12. [If "Private School" from Question 11] Please specify the type of Private School.



Q13. Why would you select [answer from question 11] for your child?



Q14. "How familiar are you with charter schools in K-12 education?"

Q16. "How familiar are you with 'virtual schools' in K-12 education? These schools are sometimes called 'cyber schools' and 'online schools.' "

Q30. "How familiar are you with 'school vouchers' in K-12 education?"

	Charter School Familiar* %	Virtual School Familiar* %	School Voucher Familiar* %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	**53**	**37**	**55**	**1,200**
K-12 Parent	56	35	55	528
City or Region				
Panhandle	42	42	62	69
North-Central	51	38	54	96
South-Central	57	35	54	203
Eastern	53	40	53	512
Omaha	52	28	57	210
Lincoln	54	40	61	110
Urban	50	41	53	109
Suburban	51	32	52	184
Small Town	54	38	56	439
Rural	53	37	56	468
Democrat	52	32	55	406
Republican	54	40	56	571
Independent	49	41	50	181
Age Group				
18 – 25	55	23	60	103
26 – 35	53	41	56	262
36 – 45	52	35	54	375
46 – 55	46	43	51	193
56 – 65	58	35	60	121
Over 65	56	38	54	146
Male	52	38	56	587
Female	53	36	55	613
African American	61	30	43	44
Hispanic	54	46	51	93
White	53	36	56	1,011
Catholic	52	38	50	337
Protestant	52	37	59	732
None	55	34	49	108
Household Income				
Under $25,000	51	52	55	104
$25,000 - $49,999	51	32	57	423
$50,000 - $74,999	54	38	54	453
$75,000 - $150,000	54	37	54	145
Over $150,000	53	35	53	75
Self or Family in Union?				
Union Ties	51	36	53	118

** Familiarity combines the responses including "Very Familiar" and "Somewhat Familiar."*

Q15. "Charter schools are public schools that have more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are exempt from many existing public school regulations. In general, do you favor or oppose this idea?"

	"Somewhat" or "Strongly" Favor %	Favor-Oppose Gap %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	**48**	**+5**	**1,200**
K-12 Parent	50	+8	528
City or Region			
Panhandle	43	(-4)	69
North-Central	52	+14	96
South-Central	53	+15	203
Eastern	47	+4	512
Omaha	47	EVEN	210
Lincoln	46	(-1)	110
Urban	44	(-4)	109
Suburban	52	+11	184
Small Town	47	+3	439
Rural	48	+6	468
Democrat	51	+10	406
Republican	46	EVEN	571
Independent	50	+10	181
Age Group			
18 – 25	42	(-7)	103
26 – 35	50	+8	262
36 – 45	49	+8	375
46 – 55	44	(-4)	193
56 – 65	54	+17	121
Over 65	47	EVEN	146
Male	49	+8	587
Female	47	+2	613
African American	50	+7	44
Hispanic	51	+15	93
White	47	+3	1,011
Catholic	55	+18	337
Protestant	45	EVEN	732
None	44	(-1)	108
Household Income			
Under $25,000	49	+10	104
$25,000 - $49,999	46	+2	423
$50,000 - $74,999	49	+6	453
$75,000 - $150,000	50	+7	145
Over $150,000	51	+8	75
Self or Family in Union?			
Union Ties	51	+6	118

Q18. "Some states give tax credits to individuals and businesses if they contribute money to nonprofit organizations that distribute private school scholarships. This policy supports a "tax-credit scholarship system." If a proposal were made in Nebraska to create such a system, would you favor or oppose such plan?"

	"Somewhat" or "Strongly" Favor %	Favor-Oppose Gap %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	**55**	**+14**	**1,200**
K-12 Parent	55	+15	528
City or Region			
Panhandle	58	+22	69
North-Central	56	+14	96
South-Central	51	+8	203
Eastern	55	+16	512
Omaha	55	+12	210
Lincoln	60	+20	110
Urban	60	+22	109
Suburban	49	(-1)	184
Small Town	56	+17	439
Rural	56	+17	468
Democrat	52	+8	406
Republican	59	+21	571
Independent	53	+9	181
Age Group			
18 – 25	59	+23	103
26 – 35	55	+12	262
36 – 45	54	+13	375
46 – 55	61	+27	193
56 – 65	54	+13	121
Over 65	49	+4	146
Male	56	+16	587
Female	55	+14	613
African American	61	+27	44
Hispanic	57	+19	93
White	56	+15	1,011
Catholic	56	+15	337
Protestant	54	+13	732
None	57	+19	108
Household Income			
Under $25,000	58	+22	104
$25,000 - $49,999	54	+12	423
$50,000 - $74,999	56	+16	453
$75,000 - $150,000	50	+6	145
Over $150,000	61	+28	75
Self or Family in Union?			
Union Ties	59	+22	118

Q31. "School vouchers allow parents the option of sending their children to the school of their choice, whether that school is public or private, including both religious and non-religious schools. If this policy were adopted, tax dollars currently allocated to a school district would be allocated to parents in the form of a "school voucher" to help pay tuition for the school where they choose to send their child. In general, do you favor or oppose this idea?"

	"Somewhat" or "Strongly" Favor %	Favor-Oppose Gap %	N=
TOTAL LIKELY VOTERS	**55**	**+14**	**1,200**
K-12 Parent	51	+7	528
City or Region			
Panhandle	51	+8	69
North-Central	52	+7	96
South-Central	55	+14	203
Eastern	54	+12	512
Omaha	58	+21	210
Lincoln	60	+22	110
Urban	57	+18	109
Suburban	56	+16	184
Small Town	57	+17	439
Rural	53	+10	468
Democrat	53	+11	406
Republican	54	+11	571
Independent	63	+30	181
Age Group			
18 – 25	57	+16	103
26 – 35	58	+21	262
36 – 45	52	+7	375
46 – 55	57	+17	193
56 – 65	55	+13	121
Over 65	54	+16	146
Male	56	+16	587
Female	54	+12	613
African American	34	(-32)	44
Hispanic	52	+7	93
White	56	+16	1,011
Catholic	56	+16	337
Protestant	54	+12	732
None	57	+16	108
Household Income			
Under $25,000	56	+15	104
$25,000 - $49,999	58	+19	423
$50,000 - $74,999	49	+2	453
$75,000 - $150,000	58	+22	145
Over $150,000	69	+44	75
Self or Family in Union?			
Union Ties	61	+25	118

Part 2 Topline Results & Questionnaire

April 17 – 19, 2009
N = 1,200 Likely Voters
Response Rate = 44%

"For this brief interview, if you are completely unsure about your answer or have no feelings for an answer, you can say 'I Don't Know'." [ENTER AS "DK"]

1. What ONE WORD best describes your impression of Nebraska? Just the one word that best describes Nebraska. [OPEN-END. IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK." ACCEPT UP TO TWO RESPONSES, BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR SECOND RESPONSE]

Displaying coded response counts ≥ 10 responses.

University of Nebraska Football	133
Ranching	132
Cornhusker	126
Farming	106
Beef	95
Rural	77
Warren Buffett	53
Where the West Begins	50
Conservative	49
Tornado Alley	49
Kool-Aid	48
Poor	42
Flat	37
Arbor Day	36
Backward	34
Large State	34
The Good Life	34
Green	25

2. I am going to name several issues facing the State of Nebraska, and I would like you to select the one that is most important to you… [RANDOMIZE RESPONSES TO AVOID BIAS]

Jobs and Economic Growth	28%
Taxes	18%
Housing	15%
K-12 Education	14%
Healthcare	12%
Undecided/Other	8%
Crime	5%

3. How would you rate Nebraska's public school system?

Excellent	11%
Good	37%
Fair	29%
Poor	11%
Undecided	12%

4. What ONE WORD best describes your impression of Nebraska's public school system? Just the one word that best describes Nebraska's education system. [OPEN-END. IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK". ACCEPT UP TO TWO RESPONSES, BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR SECOND RESPONSE]

Displaying verbatim and coded impressions, frequency ≥ 11 responses.

Good/Strong Academics	182
Expensive	159
Sports	144
Don't Know	97
Rural	96
Good/Excellent teachers	84
Up-To-Date	73
Student-Oriented	72
High Quality	61
Bureaucratic	58
Modern	45
Top Notch	45
Old-Fashioned	44
Under-Performing	36

5. Do you believe that public school funding in Nebraska is at a level that is:

Too High	38%
About Right	33%
Too Low	29%

6. Approximately how much do you think is currently spent on each student in Nebraska's public schools? Your estimate will represent the combined expenditures of local, state, and federal governments.

Less than $3,000	3%
$3,001 – $6,000	16%
$6,001 – $9,000	32%
$9,001 – $12,000	38%
Over $12,000	11%

7. Do you believe that the typical salary for Nebraska public school teachers is:

Too High	36%
About Right	32%
Too Low	32%

8. Approximately how much do you think is the typical salary for Nebraska's public school teachers?

Less than $30,000	16%
$30,000 – $40,000	33%
$40,001 – $50,000	34%
$50,001 – $60,000	11%
Over $60,000	6%

9. Who has the greatest influence on Nebraska's public school system? [RANDOMIZE RESPONSES TO AVOID BIAS]

Local School Boards	24%
State Government	22%
Teachers	17%
Parents	16%
Unions	14%
Undecided/Other	7%

10. What do you see as the biggest challenge confronting Nebraska's public school system? [RANDOMIZE RESPONSES TO AVOID BIAS]

Lack of Accountability	29%
Poor Engagement with Parents	21%
Poor Student Discipline & Self-control	16%
Overcrowded Schools	13%
Lack of Funding	11%
Overcrowded Classrooms	10%

11. If it were your decision and you could select any type of school, what type of school would you select in order to obtain the best education for your child? [RANDOMIZE RESPONSES TO AVOID BIAS]

Private School	48%
Homeschooling	20%
Regular Public School	16%
Charter School	11%
Virtual School	5%

12. [If "Private School" from Question 11] Please specify the type of Private School.

Religious	57%
Non-religious	43%

13. Why would you select [answer from question 12] for your child?
[RANDOMIZE RESPONSES TO AVOID BIAS]

Academic Quality & Curriculum	37%
Extracurricular Activities	13%
Religious or Philosophical Mission	30%
Location, Convenience	9%
Discipline & Safety	8%
Other	3%

"For the remainder of this interview, if you are completely unsure about your answer or have no feelings for an answer, feel free to say 'I Don't Know'." [ENTER AS "DK"]

14. How familiar are you with charter schools in K-12 education? [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

Very Familiar	22%
Somewhat Familiar	31%
Not That Familiar	25%
I Have Never Heard of "Charter Schools"	15%
Don't Know	7%

15. Charter schools are public schools that have more control over their own budget, staff, and curriculum, and are exempt from many existing public school regulations. In general, do you favor or oppose this idea? [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

Strongly Favor	20%
Somewhat Favor	28%
Somewhat Oppose	22%
Strongly Oppose	21%
Don't Know	9%

16. How familiar are you with "virtual schools" in K-12 education? These schools are sometimes called "cyber schools" and "online schools". [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

Very Familiar	3%
Somewhat Familiar	34%
Not That Familiar	45%
I Have Never Heard of "Virtual, Cyber, or Online Schools"	10%
Don't Know	8%

17. Virtual schools can be public or private schools that allow elementary, middle, and high school students to work with their curriculum and teachers over the Internet, rather than a traditional classroom. In general, do you favor or oppose this kind of idea? [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

Strongly Favor	11%
Somewhat Favor	29%
Somewhat Oppose	22%
Strongly Oppose	19%
Don't Know	19%

18. Some states give tax credits to individuals and businesses if they contribute money to nonprofit organizations that distribute private school scholarships. This policy supports a "tax-credit scholarship system". If a proposal were made in Nebraska to create such a system, would you favor or oppose such plan? [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

Strongly Favor	24%
Somewhat Favor	31%
Somewhat Oppose	24%
Strongly Oppose	17%
Don't Know	4%

19. Some people believe that tax-credit scholarships should be available to all families, regardless of incomes and special needs. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

Strongly Agree	26%
Somewhat Agree	29%
Somewhat Disagree	21%
Strongly Disagree	18%
Don't Know	6%

20. Some people believe that tax-credit scholarships should be available to students based on financial need. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

Strongly Agree	27%
Somewhat Agree	30%
Somewhat Disagree	22%
Strongly Disagree	17%
Don't Know	4%

21. Thinking ahead to the next election, when a candidate for Governor, State Senator or Representative supports tax-credit scholarships, would that make you more likely to vote for them, less likely to vote for them, or make no difference whatsoever in your selection of candidates? [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"]

More Likely	19%
Undecided	20%
Less Likely	13%
No Difference	48%

"In this section, I would like to know if you think the following statements are 'likely' or 'unlikely' to happen if a tax-credit scholarship system is implemented in Nebraska. If you are unsure, feel free to say 'I Don't Know.' " [IF DEPENDS, PROBE ONCE. IF STILL DEPENDS, ENTER AS "DK"; QUESTIONS 22 – 29 ROTATED TO AVOID BIAS]

22. Parents will have more options.

Likely	52%
Unlikely	40%
Don't Know	8%

23. Parents will need better information for decisions.

Likely	49%
Unlikely	39%
Don't Know	12%

24. Parents will have more power.

Likely	51%
Unlikely	41%
Don't Know	8%

25. Private schools will retain students.

Likely	54%
Unlikely	39%
Don't Know	7%

26. Public schools and private schools will compete for students.

Likely	56%
Unlikely	35%
Don't Know	9%

27. Private schools will not be accountable.

Likely	45%
Unlikely	48%
Don't Know	7%

28. Public schools will close.

Likely	34%
Unlikely	59%
Don't Know	7%

29. Public schools and private schools will both have incentives to improve.

Likely	57%
Unlikely	38%
Don't Know	5%

30. How familiar are you with "school vouchers" in K-12 education?

Very Familiar	23%
Somewhat Familiar	32%
Not That Familiar	29%
I Have Never Heard of "School Vouchers"	12%
Don't Know	4%

31. School vouchers allow parents the option of sending their children to the school of their choice, whether that school is public or private, including both religious and non-religious schools.

If this policy were adopted, tax dollars currently allocated to a school district would be allocated to parents in the form of a "school voucher" to help pay tuition for the school where they choose to send their child. In general, do you favor or oppose this idea?

Strongly Favor	26%
Somewhat Favor	29%
Somewhat Oppose	22%
Strongly Oppose	19%
Don't Know	4%

Demographics

"Now we have a few questions to make sure that we have an accurate sampling of respondents…"

32. Are you currently the parent or guardian of any school-age children in grades Kindergarten through 12?

Yes	44%
No	55%
Don't Know	1%

[IF QUESTION 32 ANSWER IS "YES", GO TO QUESTION 33, OTHERWISE GO TO QUESTION 34]

33. Do you have a child (or children) attending:

Regular Public School	51%
Private School	23%
Homeschooling	17%
Combination of Two or More "School Types"	5%
Charter School	2%
Virtual School	2%

34. Do your political views most closely reflect those of a:

Democrat	34%
Libertarian	1%
Republican	48%
Other Party Affiliation	2%
Independent/No Party Affiliation	15%

35. What is your zip code? [Based on zip code response, code city or state geographic location:]

Eastern	43%
Omaha	18%
South-Central	17%
Lincoln	9%
North-Central	8%
Panhandle	6%

36. How would you best describe where you live?

Urban	9%
Suburban	15%
Small Town	37%
Rural	39%

37. Which of the following age categories do you fall in?

18 – 25	9%
26 – 35	22%
36 – 45	31%
46 – 55	16%
56 – 65	10%
Over 65	12%

38. Are you:

African American	4%
Asian	2%
Hispanic	8%
Native American	1%
White	84%
Other	1%

39. What is your religion, if any?

Catholic	28%
Jewish	1%
Baptist	9%
Lutheran	16%
Methodist	11%
Other Protestant	25%
Other Religion	1%
None	9%

40. Would you tell me into which of the following categories your total family income falls?

Under $25,000	9%
$25,000-$49,999	35%
$50,000 - $74,999	38%
$75,000 - $150,000	12%
Over $150,000	6%

41. Are you or anyone in your family a union (teacher or labor) member?

Yes	10%
No	88%
Don't Know	2%

42. Are you:

Male	49%
Female	51%

THE FRIEDMAN FOUNDATION FOR Educational Choice

Milton and Rose D. Friedman established the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice in 1996. We are a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization addressing the Friedmans' long-standing concern about the urgent challenges facing America's elementary and secondary education systems. The foundation's philosophy asserts that the best way to improve the quality of education is to enable all parents to have unfettered free choice of the schools that their children attend. The Friedman Foundation conducts research and outreach projects to educate the general public and to amplify the call for systemic reform through school choice.

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Nobel Laureate and Founder of the Friedman Foundation

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